of Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai rank 4th, 6th and 13th respectively among 41 cities of the world. With respect to the ambient levels of sulphur dioxide, the above cities rank 27th, 18th and 37th respectively among 54 cities of the world.

(c) Based on estimated air and water pollution load, the 10 most polluted cities in the country on order of their pollution ranking are: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Pune and Lucknow.

Increase in forest cover of Delhi

3858. PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the forest cover of Delhi increased from 26 sq. km. in 1978 to 88 sq. km. in 1999 i.e. more than three times, as per the latest report of the Forest Survey of India;

(b) what steps have been taken/are being taken to increase the forest cover throughout India, with the help of State Governments/ NGOs and voluntary organisations; and

(c) what has been its effect?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Various important steps taken by the Government for increasing of forest cover throughout the country are:

(i) Afforestation programmes are undertaken by State/UT Governments including by involving NGOs and voluntary organisations from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India.

(ii) Externally aided projects are being implemented for development and preservation of forests.

(iii) Guidelines have been issued to all State/UT Governments to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.

(iv) Forest (Conservation) Act, the 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest lands.

(v) A net work of protected areas has been established.

(vi) Ministry has prepared a National Forestry Action Plan to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for

ecological stability and people centered development through improvement in investment for conservation and development of forest resources.

(c) There has been an increase in the forest cover of the country by 3896 sq. km. i.e. from 6,33,397 sq. km. to 6,37,293 sq. km. during the period from 1995 to 1998.

Elephant Population

3859. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the estimated elephant population in the country;

(b) how many of them are in Karnataka;

(c) whether Project Elephant is under implementation in States;

(d) the names of States covered under the above project;

(e) the amount released during 2000-2001 to such States for the implementation of Project Elephant;

(f) the number of elephants died due to poaching in Karnataka; and

(g) the steps taken to protect elephants in the country and in Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The estimated population of elephants in the country is about 28,000—29,000.

(b) According to the census conducted in 1997, the elephant population in Karnataka is around 6000.

(c) to (e) Project Elephant is being implemented in the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. An amount of Rs. 636.852 lakh was released during 2000-01 to the aforesaid States for the implementation of Project Elephant.

(f) As informed by the State Government, 19 elephants died in Karnataka due to poaching during 2000-2001.

(g) Elephants have been included in schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which prohibits their hunting. The Act was further amended in 1986 and 1991 to prohibit trade in ivory. Export of ivory from the country is also banned. A Centrally sponsored scheme "Project Elephant" was launched in February, 1992 to provide financial and technical assistance to the elephant bearing